



EASTERN AREA COORDINATING GROUP

Date: August 17, 2016
 To: NWCG Participating Agencies
 From: Eastern Area Coordinating Group
 Subject: 2016 Key Message and Direction to EA Crew Bosses

The Eastern Area (EA) has a long history of mobilizing skilled and qualified fire crews to assist other geographic areas. Each agency within this Geographic Area (GA) is commended for not only developing the skills and qualifications needed for the job; but for also creating an expectation that EA crews and overhead exhibit a high level of professionalism during their assignments.

The Eastern Area Coordinating Group (EACG) and chartered Working Teams, working to support those expectations have identified the following points as issues in need of attention for the 2016 season. You can help the EA continue to provide crews and overhead that exhibit a high level of professionalism by having your Crew Bosses cover each of these points during crew briefings and training sessions. Additionally, Fire Management Officers, supervisors and others who are responsible for assembling crews should assess each crew member for overall physical condition and fitness, as well as their experience level. Crew members must be capable of maintaining a **sustained level of ARDUOUS physical activity**. Firefighters who barely complete the Work Capacity Test should be scrutinized for overall physical condition and fitness for duty.

- **Boots:** Firefighters are taught the importance of having a pair of boots that meet the NWCG standards and are well broken in. Firefighters that have ill-fitting boots, no sole traction or a boot that blows out while working on the fireline are a hazard to themselves and their crew. Firefighters that need to be removed from the line and transported to town for new boots impedes operations and reflects poorly on the individual, the crew and the EA. Crew Bosses are responsible for inspecting each crew member to check for proper footwear prior to leaving your mobilization center. **Boot standards:** Minimum 8" high (measured bottom of heel to top of boot); lace-type leather work boots with lug melt-resistant soles. (Alaska is exempt from lug sole requirement.)
- **Hydration:** Heat related illness is a serious health issue, and preventative measures should be implemented long before a mobilization occurs. Recent studies on heat related illness show that overall fitness levels have more of a bearing on the body's ability to regulate temperature, than the level of fluid intake. In fact, it is possible to overdo fluid replacement when the body needs to be cooled. The Missoula Technology and Development Center (MTDC) make the following recommendations to maintain hydration:
 - *Firefighters may use water bottles, a sipping hydration system, or a combination of both. Studies showed no differences in hydration status based on the personal drinking system firefighters used.*

- *Firefighters should drink small amounts of fluid every 15 to 20 minutes. About one-third to one-half of the fluid consumed during each shift should be a sports drink.*
- *Firefighters may benefit from a combination of personal drinking systems, using water bottles for sports drinks and sipping hydration systems for water. Do not use sports drinks in hydration systems because of difficulty in cleaning the tubes.*
- *Firefighters should rinse personal drinking systems after each use and clean them after each assignment.*
- *Firefighters should not share water bottles except during emergencies.*
- *Firefighters should monitor their hydration status during an assignment by paying attention to:*
 - *Urine color—Pale yellow or wheat color is normal. A lighter color is a sign of overhydration. Dark yellow or brown urine is a sign of dehydration.*
 - *Body weight—You should not lose more than 2 percent of your body weight during an assignment.*

For additional information on hydration, consult the MTDC report "Fitness and Work Capacity: 2008 Edition" (0851–2815–MTDC) to be published late in 2009.

- **Demob for Poor Performance:** Individuals who prove to be unfit for arduous work, who are otherwise unable to perform, or are poor workers on the fireline are to be sent home. Individual performance ratings will be used to document the reason for poor performance. Crew Bosses should utilize Crew Representatives, Interagency Resource Representatives and/or the Incident's Human Resource Representative to substantiate the rationale when demobing individuals for poor performance.

"Camp jobs" should not be given as a "reward" for poor performers, or individuals with lingering minor injuries or illnesses. Firefighters who cannot return to full work status after 1 or 2 days of "light duty" should be demobed.

- **Crew Transportation:** There has been a significant effort made through the EACG, the Eastern Area Coordination Center (EACC) and the National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) to improve modes of crew transportation for Eastern Area T2-IA Crews. Crews must recognize the fact that not all Geographic Areas (GAs) have the means to provide pickups, SUVs or other 4x4 multi passenger vehicles in lieu of school buses. However – when crews are transported on school buses, there is no reason that EA crews should be subjected to riding in vehicles or with drivers that do not meet the safe transportation standards. When crews encounter school buses for their means of transportation, the Crew Boss should be aware of the following: (from 6-Minutes for Safety, LLC)

"Buses should be initially inspected by ground support on arrival at an incident; however, crew bosses need to continually update their situational awareness on the operational condition of their assigned bus. There are four basic vehicle components that need to be continually monitored by the crew boss during the assignment.

1. **Braking system:** *Do the brakes go to the floor when the driver uses them? Does the bus pull to one side when the brakes are applied? Is there fluid leaking onto the back side of the wheel? Does the driver need to add brake fluid frequently? Do the brakes take a long time to "Air Up"?*

2. **Steering system:** *Is there a lot of play in the steering wheel? Is there fluid dripping out of the steering box? Does the bus wander from side to side while driving?*
3. **Power train:** *Does the engine run OK? Is it overheating? Are there drops of fluid noticeable under the bus after it has been sitting for a while? Does the transmission slip?*
4. **The Driver:** *Is the driver fatigued? Is that person capable of driving safely where you need to go? Is the driver confident and capable? Can they see at night? Are they a safety concern to you and your crew?*

If you notice any of these things, ask ground support to inspect the bus again. If there is no ground support, elevate the issue until you are satisfied with the response you get. Do not ignore potential safety problems. It is your duty to report potential safety problems. Talk to the Safety Officer.

Be sure and ask Ground Support or Finance for a VIPR evaluation form and fill it out truthfully. If the bus worked without any problems and the driver was great, document that. If the equipment was causing you concern for your safety and the driver was questionable, let that be known as well. The VIPR evaluation is designed to give feed back to the Contracting Officer (CO). If you neglect to fill out and turn in a VIPR evaluation, the CO will never know if the contracted equipment is good or needs to be red flagged for poor performance or safety concerns. The Finance Section will want the evaluation to ensure it gets forwarded to the CO. It is your duty as a crew boss to fill out an evaluation for your bus driver and the bus they are driving your crew around in. This contractor evaluation form is the mechanism to get old, worn out buses and inadequate drivers off the road or reward quality operators who have safe equipment and drivers."

Crew Bosses should file a SAFENET to document and correct transportation safety deficiencies.

- **Mobilization Centers:** Crews need to understand that Mobilization (Mob) Centers are operated for safe (emphasis on SAFE) and efficient transportation of crews to and from their fire assignments. Mob Centers are activated by EACC under the direction of the EACG. The Mob Center Manager works under direction of the EACC. Crew Bosses should read and understand EA Mobilization protocol as documented in the *Eastern Area Mobilization Guide*, Chapter 10, pages 14-16. Crew Bosses need to understand that the key to conflict resolution begins with advance communication. If it is necessary for your crew to travel after 2200 hours, or to hotel midway to your final destination, your home unit line officer (FMO, State Fire Supervisor, etc.) must make arrangements with the EACC Center Manager prior to arriving at the Mob Center. EACC will then inform the Mob Center Manager of the revised travel plans for the crew. During demobilization travel, individual crewmembers should not deviate from the crew itinerary unless an emergency situation exists. Questions and concerns about travel hours and times that cannot be resolved by the Mob Center Manager should be addressed to your home unit for resolution by EACC.

- **Accident Reporting:** Crew Bosses need to inform their crew members that accident and injury reports are time-sensitive and must be properly documented. An improperly documented injury or illness can result in unpaid medical bills and debt collection services coming months after the firefighter returns home from their assignment. Use the following protocols for reporting an illness or an injury while on your assignment:

Injury / Illness Reporting – STATE PERSONNEL (While on State Payroll - NOT ADs)	
FORMS	USE STATE-SPECIFIC FORMS; and <u>follow their home agency reporting timeline</u> and home unit notification protocols
NOTIFICATIONS	Immediate supervisors
	Medical Unit / Comp & Claims Specialist
	Notify IARR, or EACC if IARR is unavailable
	Home Unit if not done already while completing State-specific reports

Injury / Illness Reporting – FED PERSONNEL (Including ADs)	
FORMS	CA-1 (First Report of Injury) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed <u>immediately</u> by Crew Boss, with signed witness statement. • NOTE: The Comp/Claims Specialist will complete the CA-1 if the person is taken to the hospital. • NOTE: For ADs hired through NA S&PF (Sandra Williams), The Supervisor will be: ROBERT A. HARTLOVE
	CA-16 (Authorization for Medical Treatment) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will be completed by the Comp/Claims Specialist, or by ASC through a Forest Service Supervisor. • CA 16 must be completed within 72 hours
NOTIFICATIONS	Immediate supervisors
	Medical Unit / Comp & Claims Specialist
	Notify IARR, or EACC if IARR is unavailable
	Notify Home Unit Supervisor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NOTE Home Supervisor for ADs hired through NA S&PF is: Robert A. Hartlove (610) 557-4161

- **Casual Firefighters:**
 - Hiring and Reimbursement Documents: The Casual firefighter's home hiring unit is responsible for processing any Travel Vouchers and Firefighter Time Reports not processed at the Incident. It is very important that the Casual firefighters work directly with the Hiring Official to quickly process payroll and travel reimbursement documents. The Firefighter

Timesheets and Travel Expense Reimbursement Vouchers should be turned in to the Hiring Official immediately upon returning to the home unit.

- Changing Positions and Pay Grades: Casual firefighters will be compensated at the rate listed on their original Resource Order or Crew Manifest, unless the incident authorizes a change in classification level. If the Casual firefighter is assigned to a different position qualification, the pay rate and position change is recorded on the Crew Time Report by the Incident Supervisor (not the Crew Boss). The Casual should understand that the incident will probably require another approved "Casual Hiring Information Form" from the Hiring Official before a position change is allowed to occur.
- Crew Bosses should take time to review and understand the current AD Pay Plans for DOI and USFS. The pay plans can be downloaded from the EACC Incident Business Management website at:
 - [DOI AD Pay Plan](#)
 - [FS AD Pay Plan](#)
- **Law Enforcement Searches**: Fire personnel should understand that some Regions have implemented rigorous enforcement of drug and alcohol regulations and agency policies. Crews may encounter Law Enforcement Officers with K9 units patrolling incidents for illegal substances. Crew Bosses need to know:
 - Vehicle inspections should be conducted by SEC1 personnel. US Government vehicles can be searched at any time, with the exception of personal gear.
 - Searches of private vehicles is limited to areas in "plain view" unless LEO has established probable cause or consent by the owner.
 - Searches of personal items including packs, sleeping areas (tents, etc.) and other facilities are also limited to "plain view" unless LEO has established probable cause or consent of the owner.
 - Positive "hits" by trained K9 units is probable cause for a search without consent

For additional information, please direct crew members to visit the following websites for specific Questions and Answers:

- [Casual Hiring Q&A](#)
- [EACG's Expectations for Fireline Personnel Conduct](#)
- [EACG Incident Business Management](#)

Sincerely,



Larry Himanga
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